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SUBJECT: RESULTS OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL SURVEY ON
CORRUPTION IN GHANA

REF: ACCRA 1386

1. (U) Summary: On July 19, the local chapter of Transparency International released a public opinion poll on perceptions of corruption in Ghana. The survey, while limited to three urban areas in the south, indicated that most people view corruption as pervasive and getting worse, although they express a high tolerance for it, and are not overly concerned. The police, the Ministry of Education, and the customs service are perceived to be most corrupt. Half of those surveyed thought the government was committed to fighting corruption. End summary.

2. (U) On July 19, the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), the local chapter of Transparency International, held a press conference to release the results of its March 10-26 public opinion survey on perceptions of corruption in urban households. The survey was based on 900 interviews of a representative sample of households in the three main cities in southern Ghana: Accra-Tema, Takoradi-Sekondi, and Kumasi.

Pervasive Corruption

3. (U) The survey revealed a strong perception of significant corruption in Ghana. Ninety-two percent of respondents consider corruption a serious problem in Ghana, with around 60% stating that corruption is getting worse. Respondents attributed corruption primarily to low income and poverty. Almost 70% of respondents had been involved in bribery or corruption, mostly as victims. Two thirds said they had experienced corruption within the past year, with the same number reporting having witnessed incidents of bribery or corruption (20% said they see bribery on a daily basis). Roughly 50% said they occasionally experienced bribery in their day-to-day activity, while 33% said it was "very frequent". In one of the most interesting findings, 76% said they readily accepted the offer of a bribe, while 17% said they rejected the offer of bribes. And 88% reported that they are normally unconcerned when they witness incidents of bribery or corruption.

----- Police and Ministry of Education Seen as Most Corrupt -----

4. (U) When asked which institutions they perceived to be highly affected by corruption, 77% put the police at the top of their list, 31% said the Ministry of Education, and 31% said the Customs and Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS). Around sixteen percent cited the judicial service, civil service and Ministry of Health. The lowest (best) scores of the ten institutions cited in this study were politicians (9%), and the Electricity Company, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Ghana Immigration Service (which each scored around 5%). One third of respondents said "most" civil servants are involved in corruption. Over half thought government contracts are awarded on the basis of party loyalty, backdoor deals, nepotism, and/or ethnicity.

5. (U) The GOG got mixed reviews in its efforts to tackle corruption, with 51% of those surveyed saying the government is committed to the fight against bribery and corruption. Although the police are perceived to be the worst offenders, most of those surveyed said they rely most on the police service to combat corruption.

----- What To Do About It? -----

6. (U) Respondents offered a variety of ideas to tackle corruption. Most were economic: increase the pay of government employees and reduce poverty in the country. They also argued for stronger anti-corruption laws, stiffer prison terms, and stronger education efforts to change values which

tolerate corruption. In its presentation of the report, Ghana Integrity Initiative Executive Director Daniel Batidam recommended the adoption of a Code of Conduct for public servants and cited the need for more civic education. He hoped the GOG's anti-corruption entities could be given prosecutorial powers and called for passage of Whistle Blower and Freedom of Information Act bills which have been languishing in parliament.

Comment

17. (SBU) The study does not provide a basis to compare corruption perceptions over time or with other countries. However, it makes a compelling case that corruption in Ghana is perceived as pervasive and widely tolerated. The GII survey reinforced the results of a broader opinion poll released on July 6, the Center for Democratic Development (CDD)'s "Afrobarometer", which reported the perception that corruption in Ghana is increasing (reftel).

18. (SBU) While the police were perceived to be most corrupt in both surveys, we were somewhat surprised with the GII's finding that the Ministry of Education was perceived to be the second most corrupt institution in Ghana. This may reflect in part some high profile exam cheating incidents and teacher corruption which rocked higher education in the Spring. In addition, the education sector has one of the biggest budgets in the GOG, with significant construction and procurement providing opportunities for corruption. Press reports over the past year have noted petty corruption in school admissions, and large numbers of ghost names discovered on the education payroll for teachers and teaching staff. All of these may have impacted perceptions about the sector. GII contacts told PolChief that they are not totally surprised by this result but could not explain it fully.

19. (SBU) Clearly more work needs to be done in increasing the awareness of the need to fight corruption (many of the media questions at the press conference were also ill-informed) and in strengthening anti-corruption laws and institutions. Nonetheless, we are impressed by the apparent willingness of respondents to answer honestly about their own participation in petty bribery. Almost 20% of respondents said they refuse bribes and over half believe the government is serious about fighting corruption. When asked whether ministers, parliamentarians, civil servants or municipal officials are involved in corruption, thirty percent of respondents thought "few" were involved, while forty percent said they did not know.

110. (SBU) It was also encouraging that the Minister of Finance sent a number of senior ministry officials to the press conference with the stated purpose of highlighting the GOG's commitment to fighting corruption. Even if their comments were not altogether convincing. For example, Commissioner of CEPS General Baiden said no one is going to stop corruption", remarking that if corruption were so bad at CEPS, why did so many people seek employment there (because of corruption opportunities, others responded -- a conclusion he was unwilling to accept.)

111. (SBU) The kind of open discussion and extensive media coverage given this report was also positive. While some in the media tell us they feel government pressure not to report on incidents of corruption, the fact is that there is extensive coverage of corruption issues in the press. The directors of both GII and CDD have told PolChief they do not feel threatened or pressured by the government because of their outspoken stance on corruption. Corruption does not now seem to be so great a threat that it is significantly impacting the stability of Ghana's democracy, although the general tolerance of corruption among average Ghanaians is worrisome. However, government corruption is a frequent complaint of businessmen (including American businessmen) and it is undermining the investment climate and the effective use of economic resources.